

Important Health Notice

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Page 1 of 2

Information for Family Physicians pH1N1 – Primary Health Care Services and Supports

This Important Health Notice (IHN) provides information for family physicians regarding remuneration and other supports available to address a surge in demand for services as a result of the Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza virus (pH1N1).

Status Update:

Increased Influenza-like Illness (ILI) activity is being experienced in many parts of Ontario. pH1N1 is currently the predominant circulating strain. Although the majority of illness has shown to be mild to date, communities are experiencing an increase in demand for primary care services.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is introducing temporary measures to enable family physicians to respond to the increase in demand for primary care services. Collectively, these measures are aimed at allowing the health system to meet the needs of patients until a sufficient number of the population can be immunized. These temporary measures apply to primary care funding models, fee-for-service physicians, alternate payment programs and access to supplies and equipment. Additional information will be communicated through OHIP Bulletins.

Primary Care Funding Models

Effective immediately, the ministry will cease enforcement of the Hard Cap for billing codes and non-enrolled patients for those participating in primary care

Highlights:

- Increased ILI activity is being experienced in many parts of Ontario, and communities are experiencing an increase in demand for primary care services.
- The ministry is implementing temporary measures to enable family physicians to respond to the increase in demand.
- Supplies and equipment are also being made available for primary care practitioners to ensure healthcare worker and patient safety as the demand for services increase.

funding models. This temporary measure is being initiated to encourage the treatment of non-rostered patients with ILI by physicians in these models.

Billing codes for telephone assessment (see “Fee For Service”) will be included in the basket of services for Capitated and Primary Care enrolment models.

Immunization codes will be temporarily removed from the basket of codes for the following primary health care physician payment models: Family Health Networks, Blended Salary Model, Group Health Centre, Rural and Northern Physician Group Agreement, Weeneebayko Health Ahtuskaywin, Toronto Palliative Care Agreement, Inner City Health Associates and St. Joseph’s Health Centre. The daily limits for immunization will increase to two per patient per day.

Fee for Service

Temporary billing codes for telephone assessments have been approved. The purpose of these codes is to enable patients to receive services for ILI and to reduce the need for a direct patient visit where not necessary. These include:

K080: Telephone advice or information regarding health maintenance, diagnosis, treatment and/or prognosis to a patient or patient's representative including providing a new prescription or prescription renewal if rendered where service lasts for 10 minutes or less

.....\$11.00

K081:

a. Telephone advice or information regarding health maintenance, diagnosis, treatment and/or prognosis to a patient or patient's representative if the service lasts in excess of 10 minutes, including providing a new prescription or prescription renewal if rendered; or

b. Psychotherapy, psychiatric or primary mental health care, counselling or interview conducted by telephone, if service lasts in excess of 10 minutes but less than 16 minutes, including providing a new prescription or prescription renewal if rendered.

..... \$27.55

K082: Psychotherapy, psychiatric or primary mental health care, counselling or interview conducted by telephone per unit (unit means half hour or major part thereof), including providing a new prescription or prescription renewal if rendered

.....per unit \$55.05

These codes may also be shadow-billed by physicians in Alternative Payment Programs. The appropriate flow-through and shadow-billing premium (if applicable) will apply based on the specific contract.

An OHIP Bulletin has been posted to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care detailing these changes: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bulletin_4000_mn.html

Physicians should use the existing injection codes for immunizing against either the seasonal influenza agent or the H1N1 agent:

G590: Injection of influenza agent with visit

G591: Infection of influenza agent – sole reason for visit

Physicians should consult with their local public health unit regarding protocols for administering the vaccines.

Access to Supplies and Equipment

To further enable family physicians to deliver primary care services to patients with ILI and to ensure health care workers are protected, the ministry has made available components of the provincial stockpile of supplies and equipment.

The details of how to access the stockpile was communicated as part of IHN (Volume 6, Issue 19) released on October 22nd, 2009 and available at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/health_notices/ihn_20091022.pdf

Further details on how to obtain supplies and equipment can be accessed at: www.health.gov.on.ca/poms

Information Sources:

Questions on physician remuneration may be directed to the local OHIP claims office.

Questions on access to supplies and equipment can be directed to the ministry's Healthcare Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272*.

*Hours: M-F, 8:00-6:00, weekend: 9:00-4:00

*On-call services are available for urgent issues, and can be reached through the Health Care Provider Hotline

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